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SUBJECT: MUBARAK ANNOUNCES CANDIDACY; PROPOSES ANTI-TERROR
LEGISLATION TO REPLACE EMERGENCY LAW

CLASSIFIED BY RYAN CASTEEL, ECPO OFFICER. REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D)

Summary

1. (C) In a July 28 keynote speech, President Mubarak made several major announcements, including his decision to run for a fifth term, plans to replace the Emergency Law with new anti-terror legislation, and a call for an emergency Arab summit to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh on August 3. Mubarak also vowed to implement future legislative, parliamentary, and constitutional reforms with an aim to confront terrorism, and to continue economic reform. Given his inevitable victory, the most significant aspect of Mubarak's announcement was his specific proposal to replace the Emergency Law with anti-terrorism legislation. Mubarak, in a strong anti-terrorism position following the Sharm bombings, had a perfect opportunity to propose new measures to fight terrorism and to kick off his election campaign on a high note by promising to end the unpopular Emergency Law. End summary.

The Candidate

2. (U) Speaking in his hometown of Shibin el Kom in the central Delta governorate of Menoufiyya, President Mubarak announced his candidacy in Egypt's first-ever multi-candidate presidential election, scheduled for September 7. "I intend on applying for nomination so that I might run for the office of president in this coming presidential election," Mubarak said. Adding that he will "seek to win the trust and support of the people for a new term," he emphasized that he was seeking another term not for glory, but for the opportunity to continue serving the people of Egypt. As part of his campaign kick off, Mubarak highlighted his military experience, his rise to the presidency, and his post-election vision for reform.

Emergency Law to be Abolished?

3. (U) President Mubarak also called for new anti-terrorism legislation to replace the decades-old Emergency Law, emphasizing that constitutional and legislative reforms would be needed to eliminate terrorism. Noting that the Emergency Law had been in effect since 1914, Mubarak said "the time has come to create a decisive mechanism to fight terrorism." While defending the use of the Emergency Law to respond to "the tragic circumstances" of the past, he said that the time had come to follow the example of other countries that had recently passed comprehensive laws to combat terrorism.

4. (U) In vowing to implement future legislative, parliamentary and constitutional reforms, especially to combat terrorism, Mubarak pointed out that the reforms would also include legislation to curb emergency powers granted to the President of the Republic during threats to national security.

Arab Conference in Sharm

5. (U) Mubarak also called for a regional conference to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh on August 3. Stating that the region was witnessing "worrisome developments" in the Palestinian arena and in Iraq, and facing "many other challenges," Mubarak said a summit was needed to formulate a shared Arab vision.

Highlighting the Reform Agenda

6. On economic issues, Mubarak confirmed his commitment to

economic reform. He stated that economic liberalization -- aimed at increasing employment and economic growth -- would continue to be the foundation of Egypt's economic reform policies. Pledging to raise and modernize Egyptians' standard of living, Mubarak said that economic reform would continue to target modernization of the pension and social security systems, women's rights, support for female single-parent families, and protection of the lower class, including workers, and farmers. He emphasized that his policies would also help the middle class achieve their aspirations and ambitions. Mubarak concluded that his vision was not wishful thinking or rosy promises, but rather an expression of his ability to implement it.

Initial Media Reaction

17. (SBU) Egyptian television offered its predictably positive commentary on President Mubarak's speech, with Nabil Helmy, professor of Law at Zagazig University, touting the "historical significance" of the announcement on morning talk shows. Al-Jazeera, however, aired interviews with commentators who were highly critical of speech. They included: Magdi Hussein, editor of the Islamist newspaper Al Shaab; George Ishaq, a leader of the Kifaya, or "Enough" movement; and Abdallah Senawi, editor of the Nasserist weekly Al Arabi. These commentators denounced the presidential elections as a "farce," and questioned Mubarak's plans for reform.

18. (C) Comment: In light of the inevitable victory for Mubarak in the September 7 elections, the most significant aspect of Mubarak's announcement was his specific proposal to replace the Emergency Law with anti-terrorism legislation. The Sharm El-Sheikh bombings provided Mubarak with a reason to address the long-simmering Emergency Law issue without appearing to back down on terrorism and gives him a popular move-both domestically and internationally-to kick off his presidential election campaign. End comment.

JONES